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## How Reagan's six-unit Cabinet works on issues

Debate groups would begin  
functioning in coming weeks

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Washington  
Cabinet government, Reagan style, is  
beginning to take final shape.

First and foremost in the present Reagan  
blueprint is to bring Cabinet members  
together in six separate groups to discuss,  
debate, and make recommendations in sub-  
ject areas that pertain to each.

The idea, the White House says, stems  
from the Ford administration, when an eco-  
nomic policy group within the Cabinet proved  
most effective in the governing process.

This subject-matter approach divides the  
Cabinet into six councils:

- Natural resources and the environment;
- Food and agriculture;
- Commerce and trade;
- Human resources;
- The National Security Council (already  
established by law);
- Economic affairs.

The plan still needs the approval of the  
various Cabinet members — but the White  
House expects it to be implemented, perhaps  
with one or two more groups added, within a  
couple of weeks.

The proposal is being billed as an "alterna-  
tive" to an earlier Reagan idea of following  
his California approach to government in  
which he met daily with a small, select group  
of top-level appointees.

That idea, floated by the Reagan people  
during the transition, soon ran into obstacles,  
particularly from incoming Chief of Staff  
James Baker. Mr. Baker said he thought such  
a "supercabinet" would irritate those in the  
Cabinet who were not included.

But some White House "insiders" say  
Reagan still will have a handful of Cabinet  
members that he meets with on a day-to-day  
basis — simply because this is the way he  
likes to work. Those seen as most likely to be

included in this inner circle are Secretary of  
State Alexander M. Haig Jr., Secretary of  
Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of  
Treasury Donald T. Regan, Attorney General  
William French Smith, and CIA Director  
William J. Casey.

"There will be a supercabinet without that  
name being applied to it," one administration  
source says. He says it would "emerge," that  
it would not be "structured."

Longtime observers of the presidency are  
dubious that Reagan will be able to make  
cabinet government truly work — at least for  
very long.

Other presidents have structured their ad-  
ministrations in ways to try to ensure that  
their Cabinet members not only had frequent  
access to the Oval Office but also were the  
ones to be relied on principally for the recom-  
mendations that were turned into presidential  
initiatives or programs.

But before long top aides in the White  
House, because of their location right at the  
elbow of the President, became the chief  
advisers.

But Reagan insists he is going to use his  
Cabinet as the principal instrument of gov-  
ernment — not his White House team.

Already he has shown that he means to  
carry out this commitment to Cabinet su-  
premacy by making his foreign affairs ad-  
viser in the White House solely a  
"coordinator" on policymaking. Secretary of  
State Haig has been given assurance that he  
alone will be the shaper of foreign policy.  
Thus there will be no Zbigniew Brzezinski in  
the Reagan White House vying with the secre-  
tary of state as the former national security  
adviser did in the Carter administration.